

what is going on there and what existed before. This is actually what the first lady talked about when she was talking about the new hospital we want to build in Basra. Decades ago Iraq had one of the strongest systems. But here are some of the stories.

Mothers tell stories of watching their children die because doctors do not have a small enough tube to give them oxygen. When parents bring their children to the hospital, they must also bring food, bedding and clothing, even their own blood supply. Under Saddam Hussein, one in eight children died before the age of 5. One in three was malnourished. Infant and child mortality rates doubled in 10 years while low birth weights increased from 4.5 percent to 30 percent. Today, infant mortality rates, and this is when the coalition came in, infant mortality rates in Iraq are similar to those in much less developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The prevalence of leukemia has also increased dramatically in the past decade and continues to grow at an alarming rate. Children in the United States with leukemia have a 90 percent survival rate.

□ 1615

In Iraq, the rate is less than 10 percent. Saddam took care of himself, his family, and a core group of Baathists, but other than that, the country just totally slid. And those folks received very little health care, very few benefits from the government.

Mr. Speaker, I will yield to my colleague.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I just remember when my colleague first returned from Baghdad, he shared with a number of us, his colleagues, video footage of Baghdad as a bustling city, a very modern city, which it was. And the reason we went to Basra the first day was because Ambassador Bremer and other officials were locked in round-the-clock negotiations over the constitution. So they sent us as the first delegation of American Congressmen to Basra.

I have to tell you that going from Basra, which is like a Third World country, I mean it is ravaged not by war, it is ravaged by 30 years of neglect and tyranny by Saddam Hussein who refused to, even though billions of dollars were flowing from the Oil for Food program into his regime, and he was building more and more palaces, these monuments to his own greatness with marble floors and crystal chandeliers the size of minivans hanging from the hallway ceilings, but then go to Basra, and there is ramshackle dirt buildings falling down, roads in disrepair, sewers in disrepair, it demonstrated to me that contrast more than anything between the bustling city of Saddam Hussein to a city under the control of Basra, the Shiite population, the mendacity of this regime and the self-indulgence and evil of this regime letting so many people live in poverty while they live in sinful opulence.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) for bringing it up. It reinforces the amount of work that needs to be done there: Getting a constitution, establishing a law, getting the police force in place, getting the judiciary, getting government institutions in place, and then also practicing the art of representative government.

But there is no doubt that I believe the people of Iraq are thankful that we are there, that we are making progress in that. And we have talked about the people in Iraq that my colleague and I have personally had the opportunity to meet. We have talked about our second hand accounts that are told to us by our troops who are interacting with the Iraqi folks on a daily basis.

Then there is one other level that I just want to get to before we run out of time, and that is before I went to Iraq the last time we spent a day in Libya. And for those who do not believe that we are making progress in the war on terrorism, there are a lot of folks who are believing that we are not winning or making progress in the war on terror, or that we are not serious about it, Muammar Qaddafi, Colonel Qaddafi believes that we are making progress, that we are serious about winning this war on terrorism.

The changes that have happened in Libya are dramatic, going from somebody who had a weapons of mass destruction program, a nuclear program all under development, all secret, to where we are today, fully exposing it, telling us not only what he has, but how he got it and these types of things.

We do not fully understand exactly why, but I do not doubt that there is some relationship to what we did in Iraq and where we said we are going to be focusing on, a war on terrorism, focused on it like a laser, we are going to go after it, and however he got to where he is and however Libya got to where they are today, we ought to be thankful that in this element of the war of terrorism, we have made that much progress in a very short period of time.

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. This photograph illustrates a brief meeting that we had with Ambassador Paul Bremer across the hallway from the negotiations over the constitution. My colleague spoke of the long work we have ahead. There is a new interim Constitution, which is a radical document in the Middle East, people have basic Bill of Rights freedoms in this ancient land for the first time ever in their history. In this picture actually appears the draft of that interim constitution that Ambassador Bremer calls it.

If we will stay the course, not only will we see the changes and the repentance that we have seen of Colonel Qaddafi, but I believe we are going to see the transformation of the society of Iraq as an Islamic country in their own form of democracy and freedom and a society built on rights that will trans-

form that part of the world for our children and grandchildren and for the children and grandchildren of the good people of Iraq.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt we are making progress. I want to read a couple of quotes from a speech that we heard in Libya. And if it becomes the role for the Middle East, we will have made great progress. Think about this quote. This is one of the Libyan parliamentarians. "I believe God created man on this earth. Therefore, they have natural needs and natural rights. These are not bestowed by anyone else and they cannot be taken away by men." This is in Libya.

Now, think if they move that that direction. "Every person has the right to develop to their full potential to live in peace, security and prosperity." "How can you enslave people who are born free?"

There is something that is inside of all of us that we recognize these types of rights as being basic rights. And as we help bring those rights to Libya, as we help bring and foster those rights in Afghanistan and Iraq, we do not light the spark or the flame in these peoples, we give the flame the opportunity to grow and flourish. It is there. That is something that is in all of us, the right to be free, to be secure. And what we are doing is we are giving them the right to do that. But we also, at the same time, recognize the difficulty and also the number of people who want to extinguish that flame and enslave these people one more time just like Saddam did.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time. I thank my colleague for joining me today.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 98. Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BISHOP of Utah). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, Members of the House, once again it is a wonderful day to be here in the House and share not only with my colleagues, but with American people, the issues that are facing not only our economy but our children's future.

I guess I would have to start, since this is budget time and as we are here on the floor simultaneously, the Committee on the Budget is meeting to try to work out this \$2.4 trillion budget

that the President has sent here to the Hill. I must say to my colleagues that it is important on behalf of Americans, on behalf of working Americans, and on behalf of individuals that are unemployed in our country, that we make the right decisions not only for the future but for today.

I can tell you that I am very, very concerned about the direction we are going in right now of Members just following this White House with what they send us. We are trying to do the same thing with what they send us, as we just rubber stamp it and send it through. We cannot allow that to happen.

Under this budget, the reason we are in trouble today is it relates to just under 3 million jobs that have been lost and Americans out of work as we speak today. It is important for us to remember that we still have a health care plan that we have to put forth not only for Americans, but also to allow small businesses to be able to provide a health care plan for Americans who do not have it.

I will tell you right now for those that do have it, in many cases, their contribution is so high and it is continuing to grow, it is just really getting out of hand. But being a creature of the State legislature, where I used to be for some 8 years in the State of Florida, I cannot help but stand here on behalf of State legislators throughout the country, Democrats and Republicans, Independents and non-party, members of the legislatures throughout this country need representation here in the U.S. House of Representatives. And also local government, non-partisan local government members, partisan local government members need a voice here in the Capital and, not only a voice, but they need action.

I will tell you I came to the floor this afternoon just to share a few things with my colleagues so that they do not think that this is just a Kendrick-Meek report. And there are a few Meeks out there that are a little disgruntled as it relates to the President's budget that falls short of a good vision for our country.

Let me just make a case in point. I could not help this morning when I knocked the dew off the paper here in the Capital city, I could not help but find that the National Association of State Legislatures, that I was a member of for 8 years, is a bipartisan group. That is, legislators come together to make sure that States are not left behind and that they are able to put forth the best government possible for their particular State.

And I could not help but see this article that is on the Federal page of the Washington Post today, and it says, "President's Unfunded Mandates Criticized. Group says that States face huge bills."

Now, I want to make sure that the American people understand what I am talking about. When the President says that he wants to make his tax cuts per-

manent, he speaks very passionately about making tax cuts permanent on behalf of the most wealthy Americans. Now, I think we can all be under the umbrella as it relates to middle-class tax cuts, as it relates to child credit, as it relates to tax cuts that are helping small businesses. But when you start looking at the big tax cut for the wealthiest Americans, I do mean the individuals who are not knocking on the doors saying I need a tax cut, we are giving it to them. And we are giving it to them at the detriment of our education system.

This points out Leaving No Child Behind as an unfunded mandate to States. I think it is very, very important for us to remember that it is okay to talk about standards because that is free. We can hand standards down to State governments and they can hand standards down to local school boards that will then impose them on children. Nothing wrong with that under a plan that is going to work.

But that makes that very problematic for hard-working teachers and for students that are trying to achieve this goal and for legislators that are trying to put together a budget because States that do not have the luxury that we have here in Washington, D.C. where we will just put it on the charge card. We will forestall it off to another generation or this generation to pay it later because we want to be the ice cream and cake Congress, or ice cream and cake administration.

At a time of war and at a time that we are looking at the deficit that is, I must say, \$520 billion in change, that is going to continue to happen or continue to roll out unless we stop this President now as it relates to his budget and do not make these tax cuts permanent.

Let me take an excerpt, Mr. Speaker, from this article today in the Washington Post. "The President's budget next year will increase the burdens to States \$34 billion, according to the report made public in a news conference at the National Council of State Legislators in their winter leadership meeting in Washington, D.C., accusing the Federal Government of cost shifting.

That is not just something that they are saying. It is for real. Accusing the Federal Government of cost shifting. Utah House Speaker Stevens, who is a Republican, I must add, president of the National Council of State Legislators said, "We have seen increases in practice of these recent years, and we are concerned that this is going to get worse."

Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, there is no way in the world that State governments that are facing a \$78 billion deficit across the country are going to close that gap if we are thinking about the wealthiest Americans. We cannot shore up the Social Security trust fund and making sure that we are able to provide Social Security, the promise that we made to so many Americans, if we make these tax cuts permanent.

Now, the President is saying that the tax cuts are going to help the economy. Well, I beg to differ. Because right now we are looking at a job loss of 3 million jobs, just under 3 million jobs. And he would have to go north of that number to even be able to show an increase. So since the Great Depression, no president like this one under his watch has actually seen this kind of job loss.

And I think it is important that we take very close note to what this situation is, not only to us as Americans, adult Americans, but to our children. People talk about our children's children. I think it is also important that this article talks about we like to pass things that sound good.

□ 1630

We want to pass clearer skies. I doubt if there will be funding. We have already passed the Leave No Child Behind, which States are now saying that the Federal government, as it recommends, the Federal commitments, we have done just that, we have left children behind.

We like to talk about the war on terror. I must say the effort on terror because wars are very costly, and I think it is very, very important that we remember, and especially as it relates to my colleagues who were just on the floor commending the President and the justification on behalf of the whole Iraq experience, let me just say this, it is important that we support our troops. Our troops are going to do what they are told to do. Rightfully so. The Commander-in-Chief is the leader. But I will tell you that as Americans, we have to pay very close attention to what one may do to take the attention off of the real agenda.

And I will tell you time after time again, if you watch the President as he moves throughout the country and has press conferences and things of that nature, we talk about standards. He talks about standards. He talks about the fact that he is compassionate towards seniors and veterans and all of the soft music that may be in the background as it relates to his speeches; but I will tell you in the real world that is not the case. We are leaving the troops's children and their parents and their loved ones that are over there with sand in their teeth in Iraq or Afghanistan or in Haiti behind.

It is important that we have remember and we look at the fine print here. We have veterans that are waiting 3 months to get a prescription filled through the VA. Now, I do not fault the good people who are trying to work with what they have at the VA. But I wish that the President and I wish that this Congress would move forth in this budget to make sure that the VA can cut that in half.

Concurrent receipt. I am so glad that my colleagues on the Democratic side had enough gumption to be able to pull a bill up to this floor to allow a veteran that is disabled, so they do not have a veterans tax, of taxing them while they

are disabled and a veteran at the same time. This leadership is important.

I want to make sure that the American people do not feel that this is some sort of partisan argument against the President. I will tell you individuals will have their opportunity to stand in judgment of this administration in the coming months. But I will tell you this as Members of Congress, it is very important that articles like this where you have Republican members of the State legislature saying that we are shifting the cost to them, and when we cut the Federal commitment, which when we give this huge tax cut that has already been given to the most wealthy Americans, that there will be no money to respond to the States.

Now, how this works in the real world when you have \$78 billion in deficit throughout the country, then what do the States do? Do they raise taxes? Nine times out of ten, they do not. They increase fees. Your driver's license costs a little bit more. For individuals that are in coastal States, registration for your boat may go up a little bit more. For individuals that buy hunting licenses throughout this country, sportsmen, they pay more for their hunting license because the wildlife officers or the wildlife commission, their budget is going to be cut. So when that happens, what happens to the counties, our counties? They were just up here. Well, the cities were up here and I am going to get to them in a minute.

Our counties were just up here recently. And they were so very, very concerned. They are thinking that help is on the way, and that they are going to get some sort of relief. They look to the States for relief. The States are not going to give them the dollars that they used to give them rightfully. So what they should do so they can put forth the function to be able to make sure their residents, taxpaying Americans, are able to have some level of government services, or some level of police services or fire services, or homeland preparedness.

That is not going to happen. You make these tax cuts permanent for the most wealthy Americans, this country is going to continue to see what this speaker said, the president of the Senate of Utah said, that we are concerned it is going to get worse.

So basically, if we do not listen to the chairman of the National Conference of State Legislators make his arguments, it is almost like this Congress, Mr. Speaker, taking out a carton of milk and taking a smell of it and saying, wow, it is spoiled. Let me put it back in the refrigerator. Maybe it will be fresh tomorrow. We do know that is not going to happen.

I feel so bad for my colleagues that are "deficit hawks." It must be very difficult to come up with an argument of where we can kind of cut this deficit in half. How can you do it when you have got a President that is willing to say, let us make sure that we make the

tax cuts permanent and the more taxes you pay, the more money you should get. That may sound good in a speech, but in reality, you have Americans receiving on average somewhere maybe 50, \$300 in rebate, and then you have millionaires receiving thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars so that they can go on and do the things that they do, and it does not help the economy whatsoever.

Job growth. Let us just talk about that for a minute, because it is important since we have themed this special order to talk about States, talk about counties, talk about local governments, talk about school boards, about how the devolution of taxes will end up affecting every American's life. Let us talk about that for a minute.

The President said, hang in there. He was talking to some workers the other day. Just hang in there a little longer. It will be okay. It is going to work itself out. I must beg to differ with the President, because I feel this is the sour milk scenario once again. Let us put it back in the refrigerator. Maybe it will be fresh tomorrow. We know it will not be. The evidence is not there to justify the economic backing of what the President may feel as it relates to giving more tax cuts.

My colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), on the other side of the aisle, the Republican leader, last year he said there is nothing better the government can do, I am paraphrasing, than at a time of war than to give tax cuts.

Cake and ice cream.

We can not do that. We are supposed to be the responsible ones. Members of Congress who know better should do better. And unless we stop marching in lockstep, I must say on the Democratic side that is not the case, but on the Republican side, there seems to be a sense of pride that we need to just kind of hide behind this administration saying that it is okay. But it is not okay. For us to get to the top of where we were, I must adjust 3½ years ago looking at surpluses, now we have the largest deficit in the history of the country.

How did we get here in such a short time? Let us just give the tax cuts to the most wealthy individuals. Just put it this way, 56 percent of the tax cuts under the Bush plan is to the most wealthy Americans.

Now, I am not standing here saying I do not like individuals who are able to do the things they do, but these are the wealthiest of the wealthy. And it is very, very important for those of us that are here and have the power to do so, bring about the kinds of change that this country deserves.

Now, let me just say as it relates to the jobs, the 3 million jobs lost, the administration has changed the forecast 3 times. Well, we are going to be here by this day. No, I am sorry. We will be here by this day. No, we will be here by this day, just to try to get some sort of goal that could be met. And it is just not adding up, and I will tell you that

it is very, very important that we remember that as Members of Congress, that we stand on behalf of what is right for the country, not just because administration and the Vice President comes here and he gets over here in the side room and the next thing you know, you have Members on the other aisle walking back in feeling very beat down and, well, I guess I got to go here and be with the home team.

Well, the home team has gotten us into a 3 million job deficit, the largest deficit in the history of the country and climbing. We have State legislators that are saying, oh, my goodness, they are shifting the burden over to us. And this budget alone, the next year, increased burdens will be on the States on top of what I am telling you right now will be \$34 billion. That is not change. That is real money.

What is going to happen to you American people that are working every day, that are taking care of your family every day, that are doing all the things that this country has asked you to do to make us strong? Your children, they go to school every day. They are trying to make their lives better every day. They have hopes of going to college one day. But what we are doing here and what this administration, what the Bush administration is putting on this country right now is very, very unfortunate, and I am sorry to say it, dangerous economically. And our democracy depends on a strong economy.

Now, I will tell you that when the States make their budgets, obviously, they have to look at cuts. Their commitment is going to cut to local government. That means that the feeding program in your local community is going to probably end up reaching the ax. Here in the Federal, in this budget, we cut the COPS program, putting community police officers in communities to what? Prevent crime. Not respond to it, but prevent it. That is cut. You think the States are going to be able to pick up that burden? Of course not.

Then you look at programs as it relates to your quality of life, parks and recreations, that builds character in our communities throughout America. What has going to happen there? Maybe the summer program may not be there for your child. It does not matter what community you live in. I am not talking about Chicago, even though that would be an issue. I am not talking about Los Angeles, even though that would be an issue. I am not talking about just Miami and just my district because the State commitment has been cut because the Federal commitment has been cut to be able to allow tax breaks, permanent, on behalf of the most wealthy Americans.

I am not just talking about those cities. I am talking about Youngstown, Ohio. I am talking about small cities like Ocala, Florida. I am talking about towns and villages that count on State dollars to be able to help make and

provide the good services on behalf of their constituents.

Let us talk about cities. Well, cities, they count on counties. They counts on State governments. They count on the Federal Government. The cities were up here last week, which was quite interesting, and I took the time to listen to their arguments. And I will tell you right now, the cities are very concerned about the direction that we have continued to head in. They want homeland dollars. We talk about homeland security here in Washington. Yes, it is a good thing. I am on the Select Committee on Homeland Security. Yes, that is a very important committee. We have an appropriations subcommittee on homeland security. But let me tell you where the front line security takes place. That is in our cities and that is in our counties and that is in our small towns. And I will tell you right now they are hurting and they are feeling the pinch.

Now, you may, in a speech made by the President or by some Members on the other side, defending the President's policies of 3 years, of not really a job growth. And then when you see a job growth, it is about that big. And then we start talking about trying to get McDonald's and Burger King to re-categorize to make it manufacturing jobs to try to add on to say, okay, we have a nice little stack there now of jobs. Look what I have done.

This is so very, very important that we remember that we cannot allow this to happen, what the President has put forth in this budget of making these tax cuts permanent.

Now, I think it is important as we look at homeland security or home-front security. We have police departments right now that need equipment. We have already taken the COPS program and snatched that rug out from under them, the most positive and aggressive program of preventing crime in this country in a very long time. And because we have taken those dollars away, police chiefs and sheriffs are hurting. Right now they are responding to crime in many cases. They are not preventing it.

□ 1645

I will tell you right now, I guarantee you I do not even have to take a poll. I do not have to call CNN or MSNBC or any of the networks or the talking heads that are on 24 hours. And I guarantee you, walk up to any American and you can ask them this question: One, do you want to prevent crime or do you want crime to happen and be reported? And as we start looking at this bad trend of the Bush administration of fighting on behalf of the wealthiest Americans, that is going to continue to happen. Crime will go up. Police chiefs are going to have to work with what they have on behalf of providing the very safety that Americans deserve in big and large cities. So when we talk about tax cuts and act like it is really not anything that affects Americans, it does.

Let us talk about what is happening as relates to property taxes. Because of our efforts here, or lack thereof, to stop the Bush administration on this tax cut for the wealthiest Americans, we have a bad situation as it relates to being able to stop property taxes from going up when we talk about local commitment. What is happening as this devolution of taxation, as we continue to move down and putting these unfunded mandates on that the State legislatures are saying that we are, local communities have to raise taxes, property taxes of home-owning Americans.

Let me just share this with you. For me to stand here as a Member of Congress, I have never raised taxes on the American people. When I was in the State legislature I never raised taxes on Floridians. For us to be able to say in the county, well, we do not want to raise taxes, but I shared it with you earlier in my presentation that they come in the form of fees, of increasing fees, need a new tag or hunting license or fishing license, things of that nature, this is kind of invisible what happens in local governments. You all of the sudden see the rate of your property taxes go up because they have no choice.

This is the last area to pass the buck, city and county governments; and it is very unfortunate, very unfortunate that we put those local governments in that position. As we are up here in Washington speaking here on this floor, there are local governments right now scratching their heads, wondering how they are going to meet a budget, how are they going to be able to provide the services to Americans. So while we are putting \$50, \$200, \$300 in a tax cut, they are taking \$500, \$600, \$1,000 out of everyday Americans' pockets as it relates to property taxes because they do not have what we have.

I am going to tell you I am very disappointed as it relates to this. It is really bad to be a Member of the Congress and say you are a Member of the 108th Congress that oversaw the largest deficit in the history, not in recent years, in the history of this democracy of the Republic. I am so happy because I am glad that there is some sort of difference here as it relates to the budget and how Members feel.

We have a Republican and a Democratic side; and I will tell you, my colleagues on the Republican side, I feel for them because for them to try to figure out how they are going to make an argument and not offend the administration, I know that job is getting more difficult every day; and it is so very, very important we let the American people know how their local property taxes are being increased, how their local police services are being decreased. Not because local government is saying we want to cut community policing. We are saying it because we want to stand up on behalf of the wealthiest Americans.

I will tell you this. I am very proud of the Democratic side of this Congress

that believes in middle-class tax cuts, but as it relates to these wealthiest Floridians, wealthiest Americans, that are celebrating, an administration that stands up on behalf of giving them big tax cuts towards the detriment of local government and Americans that are trying to work every day. So it is not adding up.

I continue to see article after article of failed attempts by this administration to try to get this economy moving in the right direction. That is creating jobs; that is not a jobless economy.

I will tell you, this one Member of Congress, along with several other Members on the Democratic side, we are very concerned. Not only concerned, we are willing to take action, if given the opportunity, to put this country in the right direction.

Let us look at this, this "Deficit in Trade," New York Times today. It is not just me, a Kendrik Meek report. This is a report, a reputable newspaper here in this country, "Deficit in Trade Tops \$43 Billion."

Let me just say this. We give the administration too much credit. We give them too much credit; and I will tell you, I think on the Republican side, it is time to start asking the tough questions. It is time to start taking some action or the American people will stand in judgment of all of us, and those that are willing to stand on behalf of the American people, everyday working Americans, not just the wealthiest Americans that are celebrating this tax cut and the President speaks so passionately about, you would assume he would talk about, he would go and say, well, on behalf of No Child Left Behind, we have to fully fund that. You would assume that this President would knock down the door to try to fight on behalf of dollars to be able to go to local governments and provide teachers with the things that they need to educate our children.

Better yet, we speak passionately about making sure that we make the tax cuts permanent, outsourcing jobs. Like I said, we cannot give the administration the credit or this Congress as some Members of this Congress as though they are the authority and they have a good track record. There is no good track record. If there was one, I would not be able to stand here on this House floor speaking to my colleagues, speaking to the American people in the way that I am speaking right now.

I can speak with great evidence and great backing of how States are concerned about the direction that we are going in. How we are cutting the Federal, I keep saying it, the Federal commitment to local governments and cutting the Federal commitment to the American people.

I will tell you, as we define in the coming months, with this being an election year, yes, people will do things that they ordinarily would not do; but I will tell you one thing that has been consistent. The fact that the President has said that these tax cuts to the

wealthiest Americans will help the economy has not happened. Three million jobs lost, that is a long way to go to say that you created something, and I will tell you this. It is very, very important, very, very important in this budget time that this Congress, not just my friends on the Democratic side, but my friends on the Republican side, it is time for some Members of this Congress to go see the wizard and get some courage on behalf of the American people who allowed us to be a part of this Congress.

Remember, Members of the 108th Congress here in this U.S. House and in the other body, history will reflect on the fact that we oversaw and the Republican-controlled Congress, I must add, oversaw the largest deficit in the history of this country that children will have to pay, that living Americans will have to pay for a very, very, very long time.

I cannot help but get off of this wealthiest Americans getting this tax cut that the President wants to make permanent. It just does not add up. With all the needs that we have, efforts against terrorism, efforts to be able to make sure that we provide or we talk about the terrorism, we talk about our troops, being able to have a good national defense, but how about those individuals that have served? How about those veterans? How about those individuals that wore the uniform? How about those members of the American Legion? How about those individuals that are out doing community service like the Shriners and others that are veterans in this country and they are being stepped upon?

They are being stepped upon because they are being devalued as it relates to the commitment that they should have from this White House. Yes, there are some Members of Congress that have now said, okay, Mr. President, I am sorry, I know you want to fight on behalf of the wealthiest Americans; but we have these veterans and they are in my district, and we are going to have to do something about it.

Republicans came together with some very courageous Democrats that put forth a bill. A Member from Florida put forth a bill, but could not get it up under a Republican-controlled Congress. Democrats came together to be able to provide that opportunity so that hopefully we can do some things about concurrent receipt, which is the tax on veterans.

Remember I said earlier about how we pass it on in fees and different things that may take place, like delays on being able to see an ophthalmologist at a VA center, having backlogs at VA centers continue to increase instead of decrease, if we are really honoring and standing towards the commitment of Americans that have allowed us to be able to celebrate the very freedom that we live under and breathe under today.

Police officers, I cannot help but have a level of compassion towards po-

lice officers that are out there making \$30-something-thousand a year, carrying a weapon, protecting our communities, protecting our highways. I used to be a State trooper. I was a State trooper in Florida for 5 years. I know what it means not to have what you need to have to be able to provide the protection that you raised your right hand and said that you would do and put the other one on the Bible. I will tell you that it is important that we do not leave them behind.

So when we look at these efforts of this White House to send a \$2.4 trillion budget to this Congress, that is making tax cuts permanent on behalf of the wealthiest Floridians, I mean wealthiest Americans and Floridians I must add, the wealthiest, not folks that are just kind of, you have a good job, you are making a family income of about \$80,000 a year. We are not talking about that group. We are not talking about the individuals that are making a little bit over \$100,000.

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We are not talking about those individuals. We are not talking about those individuals that are making under \$20,000 or \$35,000 a year as a joint household income. We are talking about individuals that are making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, and who are celebrating a great representative in the White House right now, and that is the President of the United States.

But do not take my word, just look at how it is presented. When the President starts talking about tax cuts, of course he does not say we need to make sure the wealthiest Americans receive the tax cuts. But it is somewhere in the message. When you look at how it is playing out, the majority of the money in his tax cuts go to the wealthiest Americans. So it is not like he is fighting on behalf of everyday working people and saying that we want to provide that tax cut for you.

I talked earlier about the legislatures and how they are feeling the pinch and how they are passing that pinch on to local government. But police officers need equipment, and not only for homeland security but they need equipment to be able to provide safety in our local communities.

Now, let us talk for a minute about health care. I mentioned that at the top of my presentation here today before this Congress. There is no health care plan, and there will not be any money for a health care plan if we make tax cuts permanent on behalf of the wealthiest Americans. Do not think it will fall out of the sky. It will not happen. We cannot have cake and ice cream and meet a commitment that we should make to the American people.

Yet we are able to provide a health care plan that we here in this Congress celebrate. We have a health care plan that is just really something else. But I do not think my constituents sent me

up here saying to me, well, we are so delighted and we love you so much that we want to give you health care that we cannot even have or afford. I do not think that was their message.

What I am saying to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that this is important. And to those who are either listening to me right now in their offices or have even made it back home, since we have finished business this week, think about it over the weekend, about what you have to do on behalf of those individuals at the airport when you get off that plane; think about that ticket agent that is there; think about that individual that is sitting there in that airport who is a development representative on behalf of a small shoe company who needs health care and cannot afford it. Think about those individuals when we start standing in judgment of this budget.

If we allow the wealthiest Americans to receive a tax cut over good health care on behalf of every day working Americans, some that are traveling by car, some that are traveling by plane, some that are trying to make ends meet, it is really a travesty and a shame. We cannot give this Bush administration the rubber stamp and continue to allow them to move forth on failed economic policies that are going to drive this country down, not up. Much more has happened to the American worker than for the American worker, and we have to pay very close attention to that. Let us be a part of the show and make it better on behalf of the American worker.

I would say now that the decisions that are coming out of this White House on the economic front are a shame, and individuals should be embarrassed. People should be fired. We should be able to bring in a new team of strategists and advisers. But I do take comfort in the fact that this is 2004, and in a few months Americans, will be able to make the kind of decision they need to make.

I guarantee that when you do not have health care and you have to go to an emergency room for that health care, or when you are a veteran and you have to go to a Veterans Hospital to get some sort of assistance and you are waiting 3 months to see the ophthalmologist or the cardiologist, or whatever the case may be, that is not a partisan issue. That is an issue of leadership. So whether you are a Democrat, an Independent, or a Republican, whatever the case may be, there is a lot of blame to go around.

We will not be blamed on the Democratic side. I guarantee you we will not be jumping up and down on making these tax cuts permanent on behalf of the wealthiest Americans. I am just so glad that God has allowed me to have enough breath in my body to come here and put this on the RECORD and to let Americans know that we should not allow the wealthiest Americans these tax cuts. And I am not hating on them,

I am hating on the leadership of this country as it relates to the President of the United States that keeps selling to the American people that this is a good thing. I just do not know how it is.

And I will say this right now. We need to stand up on behalf of those individuals working every day and that have to stay healthy to be able to provide health care and some sort of way of life on behalf of their families, men and women, some two-parent households, some one-parent households, and with their price of health care continuing to rise, and the price of health care continuing to rise for small businesses, then we are standing up with the President for the wealthiest Americans.

I am sorry if someone is disappointed because I am here speaking on behalf of everyday Americans. The people that work in the Federal Government do not have the kind of health care they need to have, and we need to fight on their behalf. We need to say no to the President as relates to providing tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans. I am going to keep saying it, and I think that Members of this Congress should keep saying it.

I am trying to make the job easier on behalf of my friends on the Republican side that want to say it but cannot say it. And the reason why they cannot say it is that they will fall out of step with the administration. I have seen it. It has been all over the papers, the kind of pressure that this administration put on good Members of Congress who are trying to make good decisions on behalf of their constituents. It is well documented. This is not the Kendrick-Meek Report, this is the report of the reality of what is going on in this Capital city.

We should not stand by and allow this to happen, and I do mean those of us who are carrying 108th Congress voting cards. We should not allow this President to continue to make decisions and give him credit where credit is not deserved, based on the report of this administration and the fact they have not been able to create positive job creation since the President has been President. Just short of 3 million jobs.

Some say we are on our way up. Well, three million is a long way to go. Try to tell that to an individual whose unemployment has ran out and they cannot find a job. Meanwhile, we have a President who thinks and who is talking about, oh, it is good to send jobs overseas.

So while we are here fighting, and the majority, I must add, I am hoping that we can get them to really think the way they want to think and act the way they want to act and saying no to the President of the United States; that we will not allow this to happen. Because the Social Security Trust Fund will never be resolved and it will be going down into deficits.

We believe in community policing, we believe in providing health care for

those that have worn the uniform and who are entitled to the respect they should receive, many of whom have lost limbs and have diseases that they cannot shake because they fought on behalf of this country. They should not be waiting 3 to 6 months to try to see a doctor or to try to get some sort of specialty treatment at a VA Hospital.

The VA hospitals should not be closing, but they are closing, because we are about to take away their money. It is already happening, only we are going to make it permanent. So where is the money going to come from? The President is going to walk around and say we have cut taxes, we have made them permanent. Well, that sounds good. Taxes have been cut. But the reality of it is that the majority of Americans are not the ones that are receiving this, 54 percent of the dollars in that tax cut. And it is little increments as relates to every day working Americans, but huge tax cuts, in the hundreds and tens of thousands, to the wealthiest Americans, who will receive and continue to receive as far as the eye can see.

But we are here talking about where are we going to be able to provide affordable health care, talking about why we cannot stop property taxes going up. If there is a local school or bond question on the ballot in your State's primary, or a question on the ballot as relates to a local election, it is not because the school board failed you, it is not because the county government failed you, it is not because of the school boards that are operated by the city, it is not because the city has failed you, it is not because the State has failed you. It is because the President of the United States thought it was important to make sure that we provide a tax cut, and to make it permanent, I must add, on behalf of the wealthiest Americans.

As I close, I just want to say that, and this is important, that these tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans have nothing to do with the effort against terrorism. It has nothing to do with it. Nothing patriotic about giving tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans. I did not see a millionaire or a billionaire coming to my office saying, Congressman, I sure need you to fight on my behalf. I want you to make these tax cuts permanent.

You know the reason why they are not coming to my office saying that? Because they cannot look at me straight in the eye, nor can they look at the American people straight in the eye and say that. But this President, and you need to check it for yourself, this President goes flying around, burning all kinds of Federal jet fuel, talking about it is important that we make it permanent. He leans on the podium carrying on and looking and winking and all that kind of stuff, and that is good for the television, but in reality, he is telling us to forget about a health care plan because there is not one. We can forget about a good Medi-

care prescription drug plan, because there will not be one. There is not enough money to be able to do it.

And I do not even want to start about what this Congress was told and about what happened afterwards. Millions of dollars underforecast as relates to the plan that was passed. I do not even want to get into that. That is another entire special order. But as far as community policing, we can begin to look to our local communities not preventing crime but reporting crime. We had those days. We want to get away from those days, but I think those day will come back.

Veterans. Veterans. Oh, my goodness, I am so glad this is an election year and that they are getting some level or maybe a small response that is just starting from this Bush administration because of the pressure and the reality of what they have to live under, not being able to receive the kind of health care that they need and waiting in lines.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying this: I go back to the Washington Post today. State government leaders. The Utah Speaker of the House, Mr. Stevens, said that "we have seen an increase in that practice in recent years and we are concerned this is going to get worse." That is what the evidence shows. That is what will continue to happen if this House allows this President to make these tax cuts permanent on behalf of the wealthiest Americans.

State governments, brace yourself. Local communities, brace yourself. Property owners, brace yourself. Hunters and sportsmen alike, and sports-women, brace yourself. Brace yourself because you will be paying the price because we want to fight on behalf of the few. We want to make sure individuals that live in gated communities and who burn a full tank of gas getting to their front door get their tax cut.

On behalf of the Democratic side, and on behalf of some Republicans that are thinking in their mind that they want to be able to say something, not only say something but want to vote against some of this stuff that the President is putting down, I am asking this Congress does not continue to follow this President down a track of continuing not only to outsource jobs, but continuing to put this country in economic jeopardy.

I have a problem with us knocking on the bank of China saying we need money to pay down money on the largest deficit under our watch. Something is fundamentally wrong with that. And you can talk about Democrat-Republican, but the reality is there was a surplus until President Bush took the White House, then all of a sudden we have record deficits. We have red lines that are running deep you can lose consciousness.

I think it is important, my colleagues, as we take this recess over the weekend that we come clean with the American people about what is to come. I hope and pray on behalf of veterans that we do better by them.

I pray on behalf of children, who are trying to rise up to the standards that have been set by this administration without the resources in this budget that will be able to respond to the needs of every day teachers and administrators that are working to be able to make sure that they can provide an environment and also be able to put forth an education system that is going to help our children learn, outside of just having test centers and having rhetoric out there, these one-liners talking about how we have raised standards.

I hope and I pray that Members of Congress stand on behalf, and especially on the majority party, because on the Democratic side I know where we stand, but I am hoping and praying that someone, some Member stands up and gets other Members on the Republican side to say no to the President of the United States; I do not care if it is an election year or not, Mr. President, you will not make tax cuts permanent on behalf of the wealthiest Americans. And not just because we do not want you to, but because the Republic depends on the very resources you are willing to give away to individuals who do not even need it, and which will provide for health care, for Social Security, for a prescription drug plan that actually is a plan on behalf of the American people and that will drive costs down, and which will also make sure that we have police officers in our communities that are going to prevent crime and not report it.

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ISSUES FACING CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BISHOP of Utah). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I thought we would finish up this week touching on several issues. We just heard about a lot of issues from the other side of the aisle; and I have several things that I want to address, and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is here to speak as well. I want to speak on the reauthorization of the transportation bill that we will be taking up in the latter weeks of this month. I want to talk a little bit about where we stand on fighting and winning the war on terror, and I would like to finish up with a discussion about retooling Medicare and debunking some of the myths that we have heard expressed on the floor of this House this week.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) to speak on his part of the discussion.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to talk about education and an exciting thing that is occurring in my district.

I would also address some of the economic factors that this Nation has faced and will continue to face. We

have important things about Medicare that we need to communicate to the American people, and I will do that this afternoon also. If we get a chance, we will talk about the concurrent receipts issue, an issue of fairness for our veterans that this Congress, under Republican control, took care of. It had been a problem since 1892 when the bill was passed that disallowed concurrent receipts. The Democrats continue to say that we have not taken care of our veterans, and yet we took care of that concurrent receipts issue, which was a problem during the entire time of the 40 years of uninterrupted power that the Democrats held in this Congress and they refused to take care of it. They refused to hear the bill, refused to get it out of committee, and now they are claiming that we did not do that. The facts speak differently.

Mr. Speaker, returning to my education issue first, Roswell High School, New Mexico, is in my district. They recently have been named as one of 12 breakthrough high schools in the Nation by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the NASSP. The breakthrough high schools project identifies and showcases exemplary high schools which have met the challenges of low-income, high-minority student populations, which describes my district. It describes some of the most desperately needy high schools in the Nation. That is the reason No Child Left Behind was put into place. It causes our school systems to acknowledge the difficulties of teaching the low-income, high-minority student populations because they are the ones that are being left behind.

Roswell High School's success is one of the best examples of school turnaround that I personally have seen. No Child Left Behind gives schools the resources, the flexibility and local control to make great changes. I am both excited and proud to talk about Roswell High School and its principal, Mike Kakuska from the floor of this House. Mike Kakuska is my hero. He is the one who deals with young people on a day-to-day basis, encourages them to do better, convincing them that they can do better, all of the while making progress in his school. His comment is that we have a credo here: dinosaurs disappeared because they did not change. If something does not work, we change it. The education system in America has not been working. We were leaving too many children behind, and simply the title of the bill says it best. Let us stop leaving kids behind because it is the poorer and disenfranchised who never will have an opportunity to go to a different school.

No Child Left Behind has channeled tremendously increased resources at education. When President Bush came to office, the expenditure from a Federal level was about \$27 billion on education. That number is over \$50 billion now and increasing. Yet we are told by the Democrats that we are underfunding education when they know,

when they are talking about the fact that we have increased over double what they funded education at during their tenure.

The most egregious example of Democrats misusing facts is when they send our constituents in to say we are not funding IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and yet the facts tell us that traditionally from the very onset of IDEA, the funding was around \$1 billion. Finally after about 30 years, under President Clinton the funding increased from \$1 billion to \$2 billion; yet in the time that President Bush has been in office, funding has increased from \$2 billion to over \$11 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to tell the American people the truth. The greatest thing that I see No Child Left Behind doing is that it allows local flexibility and local control. Local school districts are given four different income streams where they can move money back and forth between programs. They are given the flexibility to direct money where it belongs.

If a school is failing, increased resources are sent to that school for mentorship, 101 training, or whatever it takes to get each individual student up to par. One of the most important aspects of No Child Left Behind is right now there are over 150 school districts nationwide who have 100 percent control over the education dollars that go to their school from the Federal Government.

We think that if the local school board will make decisions, if the local school board is responsible for the education of their children, if we take education out of the hands of Washington bureaucrats, if we take Washington out of the hands of the State bureaucrats that local school boards and local administrators and teachers will solve the problem.

The No Child Left Behind Act begins that process of giving local autonomy and local control. I think that Michael Kakuska and Roswell High School are the best examples in my district of what No Child Left Behind can do, and I commend them for that.

Mr. Speaker, I will speak later on about taxes, Medicare, and a few other issues.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, we will transition from the part of the infrastructure in our communities that is responsible for education to the part of the infrastructure in our communities that allows us to get to schools. I am talking about our transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to transportation, we are at a crossroads in this country. We are at the intersection of the demands for creating the type of infrastructure that will facilitate commerce and move our citizenry and trying to achieve some type of rational spending limit within our Federal budget.

Back home in my area of north Texas, we face a silent crisis. This crisis is largely unrecognized by residents